

## **What is leptospirosis?**

Leptospirosis is a disease that is caused by bacteria and associated with animals. It is more common in tropical countries.

## **Who gets leptospirosis?**

Few people in the U.S. get this disease. It occurs more often in people who work with animals such as dogs, rats, or cattle or who have a lot of contact with water.

## **How is it spread?**

Most people get leptospirosis by contact (through a break in the skin) with soil, water, or vegetation that has been contaminated with the urine of infected animals. In general it is not transmitted from person to person.

## **What are the symptoms of leptospirosis?**

People exposed to leptospirosis may have severe symptoms or no symptoms at all. The symptoms of leptospirosis include a sudden fever, chills, headache, severe body aches, and fatigue. It can also affect the liver, kidneys, or nervous system. The disease may last for several weeks. It is rarely fatal and may be misdiagnosed as meningitis or the flu.

## **How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?**

The incubation period is ten days, with a range of four to 19 days.

## **How is it diagnosed?**

It is diagnosed using specific blood tests.

## **What is the treatment for leptospirosis?**

Specific antibiotics (penicillin, tetracycline, or others) may be prescribed by a doctor to treat leptospirosis. It is important for people with this disease to receive treatment as soon as possible.

## **How can leptospirosis be prevented?**

The disease is prevented through good sanitation. The use of boots and gloves when working in hazardous situations is also important. Rodent control and the prevention of contamination with the urine of infected animals of areas in which humans live, work, or play also helps minimize the risk of spreading this disease. People should not swim or wade in potentially contaminated waters.

